

## **Frontline advocacy highlights ALA Annual Conference**

Librarians and library supporters spoke loudly and clearly about the value of libraries during the ALA 2010 Annual Conference, held in Washington, D.C., June 24–29. Advocacy was a central theme and the focus of two key programs developed by ALA President Camila Alire and her task force: “Surviving in a Tough Economy: An Advocacy Institute Workshop” and the “Frontline Advocacy Train the Trainer Program.” Attendees also gained valuable tips on the use of technology....

Public Information Office, June 29



## **Capitol Hill rally, meeting with U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Frontline Advocacy highlight Annual Conference in Washington D.C.**

By *Steve Zalusky*

Created 06/29/2010 - 13:16

Washington, D.C. - Librarians and their supporters spoke loudly and clearly about the value of libraries during the American Library Association (ALA) 2010 Annual Conference, held in Washington, D.C. from June 24-29.

As part of Library Advocacy Day Tuesday, 1,600 librarians and an additional 400 supporters registered for the rally at Upper Senate Park, according to Emily Sheketoff, executive director, ALA's Washington Office. The rally featured such speakers as Young Adult author Lauren Myracle, U. S. Rep. Vern Ehlers (MI-3), Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI), ALA President Camila Alire, and ALA Executive Director Keith Michael Fiels.

Following the rally, ALA members and supporters met with members of Congress and their staffs to drive home the needs and concerns of the libraries in their community facing local budget shortages at a time of increased library use.

Nearly 20,000 librarians participated in more than 2,400 sessions and meetings at the conference. The 2010 figures for the conference were 19,513 attendees and 6,688 exhibitors, for a total of 26,201. In 2009, the Annual Conference in Chicago drew 22,762 attendees and 6,179 exhibitors, for a total of 28,941. And in 2008, the Anaheim, Calif. conference attracted 16,295 attendees and 5,752 exhibitors, for a total of 22,047.

Advocacy was a central theme of this year's Annual Conference. One of the most important meetings took place when U. S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan met with the AASL Board of Directors, newly elected board members and elected leaders from state school library organizations affiliated with AASL. AASL President Cassandra Barnett opened the informal session with a statement emphasizing how school libraries and school librarians have taken the lead in the implementation of the five key priorities set out in "A Blue Print for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act." Secretary Duncan praised libraries and librarians for their achievements. He emphasized the need for school librarians to actively push Congress for the passage of the jobs bill. "Use your loud librarian voices" for lobbying, he said.

Perhaps anticipating Duncan's words, librarians at Annual Conference focused on ways to get their messages across. Advocacy was also the focus of two key programs developed by Camila Alire and her task force, "Surviving in a Tough Economy: An Advocacy Institute Workshop" and the "Frontline Advocacy Train the Trainer Program."

Another issue central to today's libraries was addressed when the Intellectual Freedom Committee and Committee on Legislation presented "Privacy, Libraries, and the Law," which, among other things, examined how social networking websites (especially Facebook) are changing our understanding of privacy; and new threats to privacy, including data mining and data brokers.

The challenge of balancing religious freedom and intellectual freedom provided the basis for a program co-sponsored by ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee and the Association of American Publishers, "Blasphemy! When Religious Values Clash with Intellectual Freedom Values."

A panel discussion titled "Reaching Latino Teens through Multiple Literacies: A Program for School and Public Librarians," discussed the strategies and programs three

librarians have used to reach out to and increase the literacy of the Latino teenagers in their communities.

Another discussion, “News Literacy and Preservation: Finding Using, and Losing the News,” featured Meg Smith, a specialist in local news and the lead researcher at *The Washington Post* for the Virginia Tech massacre story, who asserted that librarians are crucial in assessing the authority of news outlets, determining whether they are credible or the best or only sources. This is especially important when news outlets are increasingly utilizing Facebook.

Librarians attending the conference also gained valuable tips on the use of technology. The Office for Information Technology Policy (OITP), through the Subcommittee on America’s Libraries for the 21st Century, showcased new cutting-edge technologies. One project from the Contra Costa County Library in California is the “Library-a-Go-Go” initiative, which featured a fully automated touch-screen book lending machine that operates along the lines of an ATM.

Those attending this year's Conference were also treated to a series of speakers who entertained while also sharing valuable insights.

Thousands who attended the Opening General Session responded enthusiastically to remarks of renowned Nobel-Prize winning author, editor and professor Toni Morrison, whose “Beloved” earned the Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

Throughout Morrison’s powerful presentation, she left no doubt about her high esteem for libraries. “I suspect that every single author that speaks to librarians can tell you about his or her intimate, steady, and vital relationships to libraries,” she said.

The Auditorium Speaker series offered a variety of great speakers, including popular novelist John Grisham, who will be the 2011 Honorary Chair for National Library Week. Dave Isay, the founder of StoryCorps, a nonprofit oral history project that honors and celebrates the lives of everyday people through listening. Other speakers who were enjoyed by large audiences included Sir Salman Rushdie, Dennis Lehane, Nancy Pearl and Mary McDonough; Sue Monk Kidd and Ann Kidd Taylor; puzzle master Will Shortz; and a graphic novel panel featuring David Small and Audrey Niffenegger; and Marlo Thomas.

The popular ALA Annual conference series “Many Voices, One Nation” featured readings from novelists, storytellers, and poets. Benjamin Alire Sáenz, an artist, poet, and novelist, read from his fifth book of poems, “The Book of What Remains.”

Comedian, writer, and ALTAFF national spokesperson Paula Poundstone headlined ALTAFF’s popular Sunday evening comedy program, “The Laugh’s On Us!” which featured top comedians and authors.

The subject of fun was also touched on during the President's Program, which featured Eppo van Nispen tot Sevenaer, an inspirational speaker whose speech focused on the future of media and libraries. "We've done an incredibly bad job in libraries of not having fun, it doesn't have to be 24/7 serious," he said.

Friday, however, was a day for serious business, as many conference attendees took part in Libraries Build Communities, a day-long service effort.

On Monday, several library directors movingly described the public's response to their participation in the American Dream Starts @ your library, an initiative that helps libraries provide literacy services for adult English language learners.

The very successful exhibits program concluded with a rousing performance by acclaimed songwriter and performer Natalie Merchant, whose new two-CD set of songs adapted from the works of various classic and contemporary poets is called "Leave Your Sleep."

On Tuesday, the closing session featured author Amy Sedaris, author of the *New York Times* bestseller "I Like You: Hospitality Under the Influence."

And on Tuesday night at the Presidential Inaugural, ALA President 2009-10 Camila Alire welcomed 2010-11 President Roberta Stevens.

Submit on behalf of::  
[Steve Zalusky](#) [1]

- [Inside ALA](#)
- [#ala10](#)
- [Public Information Office \(PIO\)](#)

American Libraries Magazine | 50 East Huron | Chicago, IL 60611 | [Login](#)

**ALA**AmericanLibraryAssociation